



Student: **Michael Higley-Vance**

**THIS FORM MUST BE COMPLETELY FILLED IN**

**Follow these procedures:** If requested by your instructor, please include an assignment cover sheet. This will become the first page of your assignment. In addition, your assignment header should include your last name, first initial, course code, dash, and assignment number. This should be left justified, with the page number right justified. For example:

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**Save a copy of your assignments:** You may need to re-submit an assignment at your instructor's request. Make sure you save your files in accessible location.

**Academic integrity:** All work submitted in each course must be your own original work. This includes all assignments, exams, term papers, and other projects required by your instructor. Knowingly submitting another person's work as your own, without properly citing the source of the work, is considered plagiarism. This will result in an unsatisfactory grade for the work submitted or for the entire course. It may also result in academic dismissal from the University.

**EDU7702-8**

**Dr. Mark Kelso**

**Online Learning Communities**

**Activity #3: Ethics in Research**

**Comments:**

**Faculty Use Only**

<Faculty comments here>

Hi Michael,

Outstanding work! Extremely well written and presented. I did see a few minor APA errors, so please keep these in mind. This assignment called for you to consider any ethical

concerns for your intended research topic, review the IRB Application, and submit a brief written description of any ethical concerns for your proposed research study. You did that perfectly.

This assignment is important as you will be utilizing participants and you will need permission from NCU IRB as well as the participating educational institution. I made a few other comments below as well for your reference. In the next assignment you will be exploring quantitative surveys...so please be sure to pay strict attention to the assignment guidelines. I see no reason to deduct any points. Thank you for completing your CITI training. For your info, the CITI is only good for two years here at NCU, so, if you go over that before you complete your dissertation you will have to redo the certification. Please let me know if you have any questions. Again, outstanding work!

Mark

<Faculty Name>Kelso <Grade Earned>10 <Writing Score>3.0 <Date Graded>5/24/14

### A Discussion on Ethical Research

In order for research to be valid, ethical concerns must be evaluated to determine whether the benefits of the study outweigh the risks (Meltzoff, 2004). Current ethical guidelines have their origins in The Belmont Report (1979). Since beneficence, respect for persons, and justice represent the basic fundamental principles of ethical research (“Belmont”, 1979; Cozby, 2009), this paper aims to provide a brief description of the assumptions and ethical issues that might exist within the proposed research study. The ethical issues that will be identified within the proposed research include: (a) respect of persons, (b) minimal risk, and (c) vulnerable populations. [Outstanding introduction.](#)

### Study Overview

Research conducted by McIntosh et al. (2008) showed that middle school discipline had a significant effect on student achievement. Student discipline is an important factor, which can influence the learning outcomes of all middle school students (ACT, 2013; Losen, Martinez, & University of California, 2013; McIntosh et al., 2008). There is currently little research to support how incorporating a blended learning environment, within the traditional classroom, can affect student discipline (Losen, Martinez, & University of California, 2013). However, the influence information and communication technologies (ICT) have had on traditional classroom practices and student behaviors have generated a need for understanding how teaching and learning happen best using blended learning (Barbour et al., 2011; Minter, 2011; Vaie et al., 2003). Additionally, with almost 50% of middle school discipline affecting student achievement (ACT, 2013) there is a need for more research to be completed in this area.

Blended learning combines face-to-face and online learning into one instructional learning package. Educational institutions are beginning to offer blended learning alternatives to

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traditional classroom instruction (Barbour et al., 2011; Minter, 2011; Vaie et al., 2003) however, there is still research that can be conducted to support current learning theory and the partnering of technology, and student behaviors (Losen, Martinez, & University of California, 2013). The proposed research will use a regression-discontinuity design (RDD), which will help determine, through a pretest-posttest design, the cause and effects blended learning have on student discipline. Unlike other research designs, the experimental group in RDD requires that learners will be assigned to the blended program based on a pre-determined amount of discipline points earned during the prior school year. This criterion is what sets RD designs apart from other quasi-experimental strategies and is most appropriate when targeting a program towards participants who most need it (Trochim, 2006).

Student participants will be selected for the blended classroom instruction, experimental group, based on a pre-determined amount of discipline points acquired during the previous school year. The experimental group will be limited to 30 participants, which will consist of 10 students from each grade level, sixth grade through eighth grade. The control group will consist of 10 randomly selected participants from each of the three grade levels, sixth grade through eighth grade. Blended and traditional classroom instruction is scheduled during the normal school year and during the normal school day of 7:00am to 2:30pm.

Participant discipline behavior data and the use of ICT will be collected each day from the experimental group. In addition to the data collected from the experimental group, behavioral data from participants enrolled in the traditional classroom only environment will also be collected. Each participant from the experimental group will be encouraged to fill out a short online survey each nine weeks asking participants to rate their level of engagement and interest using ICT in place of traditional teaching and learning methods. The data will then be separated

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into categories for this study: engagement, interests, perceived learning, and actual student achievement. An ANOVA will be conducted to determine if significant differences exist between the means of the control and experimental groups (Watts, 2012). [OK](#)

### Ethics in Research

The Belmont Report defined the principles and applications that help guide the identification of ethical issues in research (Chatham-Carpenter et al., n.d.; Cozby, 2009; Cresswell, 2009). The first assumption of ethical research, while conducting and reporting on a study, is beneficence, which can harm individuals (psychologically or physically) through any number of concerns such as loss of confidentiality (Crozby, 2009; Meltzoff, 2004). Beneficence is the ethical treatment of research participants where the intent of all research should be to maximum the benefit while minimizing the potential harm to individuals ("Belmont", 1979). The Belmont Report (1979) describes beneficence as causing no permanent physical, psychological, legal, social, or economic harm to individual research participants. Researchers must address this concern in order to assess the nature and level of potential harm, or benefit, participants may experience (Chatham-Carpenter et al., n.d.; Harris, 2005).

A second assumption of ethical research is respect for persons where each individual has the right to make decisions on their own behalf, and must not be coerced or tricked into participating (Crozby, 2009; Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). Respect for persons states that individual participants should be treated as autonomous agents and that participants with diminished autonomy are entitled to protection (Harris, 2005). In some circumstances, individual autonomy does not exist and ethics require that provisions be established to protect him or her from being coerced or tricked (Harris, 2005; Trochim & Donnelly, 2008).

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The final assumption regarding ethical research is justice or right to service, which states that each individual should benefit from research equally (“Belmont”, 1979; Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). Individual participants should expect that each group within the study, control or experimental, be equally afforded the same benefits, treated equally, and fairly without discrimination (“Belmont”, 1979; Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). In addition to participants benefiting equally, The Belmont Report (1979) indicated that research participants qualify first because of need, then effort, contribution, and finally merit. Justice in research, to be ethical, must be unbiased towards individual participants and society (Chatham-Carpenter et al., n.d.; Harris, 2005). [Extremely well written and presented. This is the only comment I have on the above section.](#)

### Respect of Persons

In order to protect individual participants from harm through conducting and reporting research several key factors are necessary: privacy, confidentiality, and informed consent (Chatham-Carpenter et al., n.d.; Harris, 2005). Participants have the right to expect a certain level of privacy, a [principal based on individual perceptions and expectations of privacy](#) (“Belmont”, 1979; Meltzoff, 2004). Research participants are afforded protection of identifiable information that could cause potential harm (“Belmont”, 1979). Respect for individual participants extends to confidentiality and is based on possible harm to participants if their opinions or thoughts are publicized (“Belmont”, 1979; Meltzoff, 2004). Lastly, informed consent requires that prospective participants be fully informed of the risks involved and give their consent before participating in any research study (“Belmont”, 1979; Trochim & Donnelly, 2008).

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**Privacy concerns in the proposed research.** The proposed study is intended to measure differences in student engagement, perceived learning, and behavioral changes due to participation in a blended learning environment within a traditional public middle school setting. The criterion for participant selection will not be revealed to students, and no differentiations between student characteristics or between classroom practices will be made except in those measured factors mentioned above. Potential student participants and their parents will have the right to accept and decline participation in the study at any time during the school year. Participant interest survey data will be collected using an anonymous online survey tool so that no identifiable information will be revealed. Behavioral data will be collected from school officials, that might include identifiable information and therefore an informed consent will be presented to each participant before their enrolment in the study. Therefore, the proposed study has no ethical concerns regarding privacy.

**Confidentiality concerns.** Participant interest questions will be asked through an anonymous online survey tool, which will protect student confidentiality. However, safeguards will be established to ensure that consent and identifying information are stored separately and will only be presented in the aggregate. This process will preserve participant confidentiality. Although data will be collected regarding participant responses towards blended learning engagement, interests, and perceived learning the data will be aggregated separately and presented without including identifiable information in the findings.

**Informed consent concerns.** The proposed research study requires that informed consent be in writing at each step of the process to include: becoming a research participant, before each assessment, and survey. The informed consent will be written at a sixth grade reading level and include the following elements; (a) an explanation of the study (b) possible

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risks, (c) study explanation, (d) a statement regarding confidentiality, (e) school information, and (f) a statement regarding voluntary participation and non-consequential withdrawal (“Belmont”, 1979). Informed consent for this study will require acceptance by both the participant and parent (Chatham-Carpenter et al., n.d.; Harris, 2005).

### **Minimal Risk Research**

Certain research is exempt from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) such as exemptions for public benefit and service programs (“Belmont”, 1979). Other research studies are considered minimal or greater than minimal risk depending on certain Health and Human Services (HHS) regulations (“Belmont”, 1979). Researchers cannot determine his or her own research status however, the researcher’s managing institution can make the determination regarding exemption using specific criteria set forth by the IRB (“Belmont”, 1979).

**Minimal risk concerns.** The proposed research study consists of a survey that will be delivered to participants every three weeks and will be collected without any identifiers. An anonymous online survey allows the collection of information, which will identify the opinions and thoughts of participants regarding blended learning engagement, student interests, and perceived learning with no more than minimal risk. According to The Belmont Report (1979), research is considered at minimal risk if response to survey questions would not put participants at risk legally, financially, socially, physically, or psychologically. Additionally, the study will be conducted in an educational setting and involve evaluating educational practices considered by the IRB to also be below minimal risk.

### **Vulnerable Populations**

Respect for persons is based on two assumptions; that individuals should be treated as autonomous agents and that persons with diminished autonomy are entitled to protection

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(Chatham-Carpenter et al., n.d.). The first statement postulates that properly informed people can best determine what is or is not in their best interests (Watts, 2012). The second statement is in regards to special restrictions, which are placed on researchers when research participants are unable to provide informed consent due to law, diminished capacity, or belonging to a disadvantaged or vulnerable group (“Belmont”, 1979, Watts, 2012). Vulnerable groups are identified in the law and include pregnant women, fetuses, neonates, prisoners, and children (“Belmont”, 1979). These restrictions protect vulnerable groups from being burdened or taken advantage of during the research (“Belmont”, 1979).

**Vulnerable population concerns.** The proposed research focuses on middle school participants between the ages of 12 and 14 and therefore, meets the criteria for selecting vulnerable populations as indicated in the law (“Belmont”, 1979). The purpose of the research is focused on children and the risk to participants is no more than minimal. Adequate provisions will be made to solicit assent of the participants, as well as parent permission, as set forth in HHS regulations (“Belmont”, 1979). The ethical considerations related to this vulnerable group are pertinent to the proposed study and must be approved by the IRB. And your target school. Are you sure you can get permission? This is important.

Well done. Please see my comments below.

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## References

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